

Colors on parade during opening ceremonies for Cobra Gold '93.

The Cutting Edge of Unified Actions

By THOMAS C. LINN

U.S. Air Force (Marvin Krause)

JTFs are temporary means for unified commanders to accomplish specific tasks

During the Cold War joint operations were primarily seen as set-piece battles to be fought by unified commanders against known threats in Europe or Korea. But in the new world disorder greater emphasis is being placed on an operational concept reminiscent of World War II: joint and combined task forces. Like Task Force 61, the joint expeditionary force assembled for Operation Watchtower at Guadalcanal, joint task forces (JTFs) are seen today as a means of tailoring military responses to a growing number of crises. As Rear Admiral David E. Frost, the operations officer at European Command, has remarked: "[JTFs are] the biggest growth industry in the military."

The challenges facing JTFs are likely to be greater than in the past. These mission-specific organizations must achieve unity of effort among disparate forces in shorter periods of time. JTFs may undergo a significant

transformation as the nature of operations changes and they become the focus of coalition efforts or part of combined task forces. To make things even more complicated, joint and combined task forces in operations such as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and counternarcotics may encompass various governmental and nongovernmental agencies functioning as either integral parts or close partners in order to achieve national objectives. Despite a seeming multitude of variables, planners can count on one constant: each JTF differs with the situation.

The Nucleus

Clearly the trend in the Armed Forces is toward joint operations. However, it should be remembered from experience in the *Mayaguez* incident and Desert One rescue operation that joint organizations don't ensure success in and of themselves. Coordinated employment of forces with different service orientations requires special consideration. JTFs are temporary means for unified commanders to accomplish specific tasks but require coordinating capabilities from more than one service, except when Navy and Marine Corps forces are employed together. Ideally, the nature of a task should determine the service of the JTF commander and the

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas C. Linn, USMC, is assigned to the Plans Division at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, and has taught at the Amphibious Warfare School. He participated in the Kurdish relief effort in northern Iraq.

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identification of the right forces with the requisite capabilities for a given mission.

The predominant maritime nature of Earnest Will (protecting Kuwaiti tankers transiting the Persian Gulf), for example, necessitated that naval forces form the core of the JTF and a naval staff act as the nuclear command element. Since Proven Force consisted largely of air attacks launched from Turkish bases against Iraqi targets in Desert Storm, the Air Force provided the JTF nucleus. Because of inherent expeditionary capabilities and expertise in transitioning ashore from sea bases, Marine units were the force of choice for JTFs during Sea Angel in Bangladesh and Restore Hope in Somalia. The fundamental challenge facing JTF command elements is achieving unity of effort among diverse service forces in a relatively short period of time. As Joint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the U.S. Armed Forces*, points out: "Effectively integrated joint forces expose no weak points or seams." The more demanding a mission the more stress it places on a JTF, and structural seams may be subject to fracture. It is possible that ad hoc JTFs can be formed as in the case of Provide Comfort which furnished relief to Kurds in northern Iraq. Service components such as Central Air Force provided the nucleus for Southern Watch to enforce no-fly zones over southern Iraq. But the merits of forming JTFs around service organizations such as an Army corps, numbered fleet, Marine Expeditionary Force, or numbered Air Force lies in unity of effort and in the efficiency of an existing staff with established operating procedures, previous training, and common doctrine. Service headquarters provide nuclei for JTFs around which augmenting forces can rapidly form.

The building blocks of JTFs are service capabilities. Every effort must be made to preserve the integrity of tactical level units, those within JTFs being more joint at the top than at the bottom. As Lieutenant General John H. Cushman, USA (Ret.), noted in *Thoughts for Joint Commanders*, a JTF can be seen as a system of systems, wherein each system represents a service organization or capability. JTF commanders are responsible for harmonizing systems in pursuit of objectives. But inevitably procedural differences arise among service organizations. Marines

who took part in JTF Restore Hope, for instance, published operations orders in a five-paragraph/rapid response planning format, but the Army used a decision matrix format. Service differences regarding Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC) procedures in Desert Storm are well known. Much is also made of the need for joint doctrine which certainly plays a role in reducing differences. Yet interservice doctrine today exceeds what was available to the architects of joint success during World War II. Inherent differences must be minimized to avoid their divisive effects, something which is largely up to a JTF commander's leadership skills and ability to build a cohesive team.

No precise formula exists for organizing JTFs, and specifics vary with given situations. Joint Pub 5-00.2, *Joint Task Force Planning Guidance and Procedures*, proposes JTFs built upon Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force components as in Restore Hope and similarly the U.S. Central Command organization for Desert Storm. Others in the aftermath of the Gulf conflict have proposed

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more functional approaches to using ground, sea, and air components. JTFs may be structured for specific operations in a given geographic area, such as in Provide Comfort when JTF

Alpha was created for Special Operations Forces at Kurdish camps in the Turkish mountains and JTF B was established to secure and resettle Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq. Conceivably, JTFs may also be formed using a combination of geographic-oriented and functional organizations.

JTFs may undergo a metamorphosis as a situation changes. The nucleus provided by U.S. Air Forces Europe for Proven Force first served to form Provide Comfort. The latter transitioned from an air-heavy organization dropping supplies for refugees to a predominantly ground effort. Also, when sea-based operations move ashore, as may happen in Provide Promise if troops are committed to Bosnia, the naval character of a JTF can become more continental. Thus a nuclear service component may transition into an ad

hoc joint and combined task force command element as the First Marine Expeditionary Force in Somalia for Provide Hope did with UNISOM II.

Headquarters functions of JTFs are far more complex than service headquarters. In many cases service organizations designated JTF command elements will be responsible for deploying, employing, and sustaining much larger and diverse forces than they had previously. Their span of control is likely to encompass land, sea, air, and special operations forces. J-3s must be cognizant of current operations and long-term planning. Even if logistics is a service responsibility, J-4s may have to allocate such sought-after resources as petroleum, blood supplies, transportation, engineer support, and common usage facilities. JTF command elements must communicate directly with U.S. Transportation Command to ensure the flow of personnel and equipment in accordance with OPLANS, and if necessary alter the sequencing of deploying forces to meet the situation.

Without significant augmentation and planning, operational bottlenecks are likely to occur. To handle such circumstances U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Atlantic Command provide command elements of JTFs with joint force augmentation cells consisting of 33 predesignated augmentees. Also, JTFs may be augmented by joint communication support elements to provide connectivity with unified commanders and National Command Authorities through the National Military Command Center.

The Coalition Symbol

Prior to Desert Storm coalitions were primarily viewed as means of maintaining regional balances of power. Since then the international community and, in particular, the United Nations have come to regard coalitions as the paradigm in responding to world problems. Collective action has created the appearance of legitimacy and burden-sharing in dealing with crises, and even Japan has

Joint Task Forces, 1983–1993

Urgent Fury
Grenada
(October 1983)
Noncombatant Evacuation

JTF-L
Lebanon
(February 1984)
Foreign Internal Defense

Earnest Will
Persian Gulf
(1987–1988)
Protect Sea Lines of Communication

Alpine Bandit
Haiti
(January 1988)
Noncombatant Evacuation

Golden Pheasant
Honduras
(March 1988)
Border Security

JTF-Alaska Oil Spill
(April–September 1989)
Environmental Cleanup
(*Exxon Valdez*)

Just Cause
Panama
(December 1989–January 1990)
Foreign Internal Defense

Poplar Tree
San Salvador
(November 1989)
Rescue

JTF-Philippines
(November–December 1989)
Foreign Internal Defense
Noncombatant Evacuation

Sharp Edge
Liberia
(May 1990–January 1991)
Noncombatant Evacuation

Patriot Defender
Israel
(January–February 1991)
Missile Defense

Proven Force
Turkey
(January–February 1991)
Offensive Operations

Provide Comfort
Turkey–Northern Iraq
(April 1991 to date)
Relief

Sea Angel
Bangladesh
(May 1991)
Disaster Relief

Fiery Vigil
Philippines
(June 1991)
Disaster / Noncombatant Evacuation

Quick Lift
Zaire
(September 1991)
Noncombatant Evacuation

Victor Squared
Haiti
(September 1991)
Noncombatant Evacuation

GTMO
Cuba
(October 1991)
Relief (Haitian Refugees)

the Vietnam War
offers an example
of an incoherent
coalition

committed elements of its Self Defense Force to multinational peace operations.

While the trend has been toward collective responses, the burden for their success in major military endeavors falls in many cases to the United States. Only this Nation has the resources to conduct large-scale, unified actions in distant regions. U.S.-led operations such as Restore Hope testify to this fact, while U.N.-led operations in both Somalia and Bosnia stand in stark contrast. As a result, U.S. military commitments have become prerequisites and catalysts for many coalition efforts. Combined joint task forces are manifestations and symbols of these coalition efforts.

The context in which combined JTFs operate must be understood. First and foremost coalitions are political arrangements among nations with recognized common interests. While decisions in U.S. unilateral actions regarding political and military objectives are determined by the President as commander in chief, in coalitions they are reached by a

consensus among the participating member nations.

Common objectives as well as decision-making processes ensure coordinated efforts within coalitions as well as restricting actions by participants. For example, the coalition in the Gulf War accomplished the objective of ejecting the Iraqis from Kuwait but constrained U.S. commanders who may have desired the total defeat of Iraq. Decisionmaking processes vary with coalitions and are time-consuming and highly structured relative to unilateral actions. Success in combined efforts relies on patience, understanding the decisionmaking and planning process, and recognizing and ameliorating differences among coalition partners.

Unity of effort in combined operations demands that coalitions accept unity of command. While this seems self-evident, some nations may be unwilling to subordinate their forces to another nation's command and instead prefer parallel commands. The

Provide Hope
Former Soviet Union
(February 1992)
Relief

JTF-LA
Los Angeles
(May 1992)
Civil Disturbance

Military Support to
U.S. Embassy, Freetown
Sierra Leone
(May 1992)
Noncombatant Evacuation

Provide Relief
Kenya-Somalia
(August 1992-February 1993)
Relief

Southern Watch
Iraq
(August 1992 to date)
No-fly Zone Enforcement

Provide Transition
Angola
(August 1992)
Foreign Internal Defense

Hurricane Andrew
Florida-Louisiana
(August-September 1992)
Disaster Relief

Typhoon Omar
Guam
(August-September 1992)
Disaster Relief

Typhoon Iniki
Hawaii
(September-October 1992)
Disaster Relief

Sea Angel II
Bangladesh
(November 1992)
Disaster Relief

Restore Hope
Somalia
(December 1992-May 1993)
Relief / Foreign Internal Defense

Provide Refuge
Kwajalein Atoll
Marshall Islands
(January 1993)
Relief

Provide Promise
Bosnia
(February 1993 to date)
Medical / Relief

JTF-120
Haiti
(September 1993)
Interdict Sea Lines
of Communication

JFT-Somalia
(October 1993)
Internal Security

Source: Adam B. Siegel and Scott M. Fabbri, "Overview of Selected Joint Task Forces, 1960-1993," CNA 37 93-0007 (Alexandria, Virginia: Center for Naval Analyses, September 1993).

F-117 stealth fighter
being readied during
Team Spirit '93.



U.S. Air Force (Scott Stewart)

Vietnam War offers an example of an incoherent coalition. Unlike the Korean War, no combined command was created to attempt to effect unity among American and South Vietnamese as well as Free World Military Forces. On the other hand, then Lieutenant General John M. Shalikashvili, USA, made it clear to allied forces in Provide Comfort that they would either operate under his tactical control or not participate at all. Their acceptance of a single command structure was a key factor in that operation's success.

In major coalition efforts, JTFs are likely to be nuclei around which combined task forces will form, as in Restore Hope. Unity of effort in combined commands will be facilitated if forces come from existing coalitions with established operating procedures. In Desert Storm coordinated action by allied navies was possible because most subscribed to NATO standardization agreements for naval operations. The differences which must be overcome in forming a joint and combined task force are usually profound and require considerable time and effort. Participants must contend with linguistic, cultural, and operational differences. Issues like rules of engagement are subject to varying interpretations but must be clear. Major differences may also exist between the capabilities of allied and U.S. forces. In some cases allied forces may arrive in a crisis region with insufficient tactical mobility or logistics expecting U.S. forces to compensate for their lack of capabilities.

Team efforts, particularly in rapidly changing situations, require an existing unity as well as dynamic leadership around which allied forces can form. Such unity is by no means inherent in multinational efforts as evidenced by reports of a fragmented

UNISOM II. Trust and confidence must be fostered from the top. No matter what the JTF organization, national components should be established which report to the overall combined commander to facilitate the employment and support of allied forces in the field. Allied staff representation should also reflect the composition of joint and combined task forces.

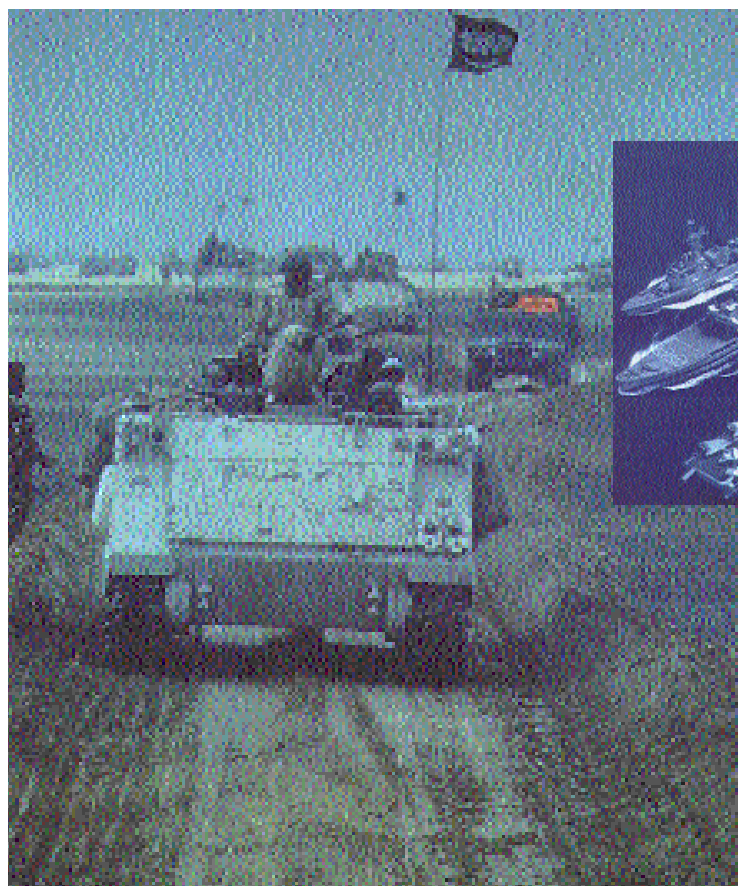
Organizational Cooperation

In the new world disorder many operational situations facing U.S. and allied forces have become increasingly complicated by domestic, economic, and environmental—as well as military—considerations. Unified actions in these situations require military forces to coordinate efforts at the operational and tactical levels with both governmental and nongovernmental agencies. In many instances, relationships among joint and combined task forces and these agencies will be ill-defined until liaison is effected. Moreover relationships are likely to vary with each agency. Nevertheless, involvement by governmental and nongovernmental agencies, in coordination with military action, is likely to be integral to crisis resolution.

The kind of the crisis at hand will determine the nature of the involvement of the agencies. In Sea Angel, which provided disaster relief in the aftermath of a cyclone in Bangladesh, the JTF coordinated its efforts with the Department of State and the Agency for International Development with which memoranda of agreement existed. It also developed ad hoc relationships and a division of labor among the International Red Cross, Red Crescent, CARE, Save the Children, and other relief agencies. While many nongovernmental humanitarian organizations eschew the appearance of formal relationships with military forces, they have nevertheless become dependent on them for security and even logistical support.

Similarly, in domestic crises which occurred as the result of Hurricane Andrew in Florida and civil unrest in Los Angeles, JTFs worked with many organizations including the Departments of Interior, Commerce, and Health and Human Services; Federal Emergency Management Agency; Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, as well as other Federal, state, and local agencies. And the complexity of counternarcotics operations

Coalition forces being channeled through a mine field during Desert Storm.



U.S. Air Force (Dean M. Fox)

USNS Passumpsic refueling a French destroyer and *USS Ranger* in the Gulf.



U.S. Navy (Russell Bos)

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requires a very different group of agencies ranging from the Drug Enforcement Administration to various counterdemand programs.

No prescribed mechanisms exist for achieving unity of effort among joint and combined task forces and various governmental and nongovernmental organizations. It is only brought about through initiative, thoroughness, cooperation, and communication on the scene. Successful joint and combined task forces have ascertained the involvement of all external agencies in a given crisis and sought to embrace agencies in order to achieve a concerted effort. JTF Sea Angel established a coordination cell for military and external agencies, and all concerned were invited to JTF planning sessions. In addition, the JTF and relief agencies followed the lead of the Bangladeshi government in determining priorities. Finally, the JTF ensured that tactical priorities meshed with relief efforts.

Unified actions have evolved with the nature of warfare. Technologies have allowed land, sea, air, and special operations forces to reach beyond their traditional bounds; joint and combined efforts have enabled the concentration of the power of all these assets. Transnational issues like the environment, domestic unrest, refugees, and drug traffic have

also increased as considerations in crisis resolution, requiring not only joint and combined responses but unity of effort with both governmental and nongovernmental agencies.

There is no formula for unified actions in crises which remain largely situation-dependent. However certain principles are evident. Joint and combined actions alone do not ensure success; rather success is ensured by an existing unity of effort and teamwork built by dynamic leadership. The task at hand will determine the requisite capabilities and the nucleus of the joint and combined task force. Organizations may vary, but the integrity of tactical units which do the fighting must be preserved with a result that the force is more joint and combined at the top than at the bottom.

JFQ